

LECTURE.

7
P.C.H.

The first of the Lower Canada College Winter Series of Lectures was delivered by Mr. Walshe, on Saturday evening, at the Odd Fellows' Hall, before a very numerous audience, who listened to the Lecturer throughout with marked attention. Several persons had to leave in consequence of the crowded state of the room. The subject of the Lecture was, "The Fire Worshippers of the East." Mr. Walshe said:—

That erudite and fascinating writer, Mir Ummum, of Delhi, sets it forth in his entertaining and instructive Bag-o-Bahar, that the proper study for man is mankind, and it is by no means the least of the many pleasures which surround a traveller's course, that he is enabled to observe the various races of man as they actually exist in the different regions and nations of the earth.

I shall designate that nation or tribe of whom I am about to speak as, in my humble opinion, the most remarkable as well as the most ancient upon earth. Time is far too limited for me to attempt to adduce any arguments in proof of this conclusion. We must, therefore, assume it as a fact that these people, the Parsees, or Fire-worshippers of the East, are directly descended from Noah, and that their ancestor, Menes, is the founder of the Egyptian Empire, and is the Misraim mentioned in Genesis as Ham's son.

This Prince instructed the Egyptians in theology, and his son (the Esculapius of the Greeks) taught the science of physic and the arts of building and writing. His posterity became the priests or instructors of the Egyptians, and here I must remark that the term priest admits of a much more extended signification than our ideas attach to it. History and tradition describe them to have been

2

the richest, the most powerful, and the most venerated class of men in that country. Their ascendancy over the minds of the people was immense, and they even exercised the unrestricted power of prescribing the terms under which each man's life was to be passed. They exclusively possessed the means of reading and writing, had a vast amount of narrative matter treasured up in memory, and alone were masters of the whole stock of medical and physical knowledge then attainable. But a veil of profound mystery hung over all these acquirements, and even their method of writing was practised in a hieroglyphic form. It is, therefore, difficult to determine what the actual religion of Egypt was at this period. The common people seem to have worshipped animal life, as the bull, the cat, the ibis, the crocodile, and fabulous objects, such as the sphynx; but the priests taught that these were merely types of a profounder system of mythology,—allegorical and mystical, not accommodated to vulgar minds, but easy to be understood by persons of more refined and liberal intellect. According to their visionary ideas, the deity resided in matter, and could only be aroused into activity by means of certain solemn invocations, and the performance of mysterious rites. Under this supposition they worshipped the sun and the moon, calling the first Osiris, and the latter Isis. Temples consecrated to these divinities were scattered all over the land of Egypt. Each had a separate order of priests, more or less important, according to the celebrity of the temple, and the property it was possessed of. Some of these were of astonishing splendor and size. A learned divine of this city, in a late lecture, referred to the ruins of Heliopolis, where once stood a Temple of the Sun, remains of which, I believe, are still to be met with.

Under a vague notion that human souls underwent a course of transmigration, and were immortal, returning in time to their former human habitations, which had only been laid aside as a temporary arrangement, they adopted the practice of embalming or preserving their dead, a subject of much interest to modern students. The business of embalming was carried on by the Priests alone, and was of a very dignified, laborious, and complicated nature.

These Priests or Philosophers were known by

the name of Magi or Enchanters, and one of their body as a direct descendant of Menes occupied the Sovereignty of Egypt for many generations, during which time great divine personages ruled in this land. About the year B. C. 1920, Abraham arrived here, and about B. C. 1491, the exodus of the children of Israel is supposed to have taken place in the days of that Pharaoh who was drowned in the Red Sea, and from history (imperfect as it is) and the traditions of these people, we are led to conclude that immediately after this event the Egyptians poured out their rage upon upon this race, avenged the destruction of their relatives, and after massacring great numbers, finally expelled the remnant of them from that country. There can be no doubt about it, these people are the real descendants of those mentioned in the Scriptures as the wise men, and the sorcerers, and the magicians who imitated for a time the miracles of Moses and Aaron. Driven out of Egypt, they say themselves that they took refuge in Persia. We learn by the first and second chapters of the Prophet Daniel that during the Babylonian captivity they were at that Court in the full exercise of their profession, and they are referred to by Jeremiah as Princes of Babylon, who accompanied the Chaldean army when it besieged Jerusalem, and this Priesthood is mentioned by historians as a peculiar element in Babylonian society. "The Chaldean order of Priests appear to have been peculiar to Babylon and other towns in its territory, especially between that city and the Persian Gulf. The vast, rich, and lofty Temple of Belus in that city served at once as a place of worship and an astronomical observatory." Nineveh, and its dependant, Babylon, having passed into the hands of the Medes, these Magi, as I shall henceforth call them, rose to eminence on the downfall of these cities or empires, and we find them afterwards mentioned as one of the six tribes constituting the empire of the Medes, where they are said to have exercised a great degree of power and authority.

The next appearance of this race in history occurs in connection with a dream of King Astyages, which they were called upon to interpret, and appear to have done so both in a truthful and satisfactory manner. Astyages' precautions having failed, Cyrus appears in realization of that dream,

4

and subdues the Medes, dethroning his grandfather, and founding the Persian monarchy. He was succeeded by his son Cambyses. But the Magi do not seem to have witnessed with indifference the sovereignty pass from the Medes to the Persians, and it was probably owing to their intrigues that a conspiracy was formed to deprive Cambyses of the throne by means of an impostor of their own sect, who called himself Smerdis, pretending that he was the younger brother of Cambyses, although that individual had been put to death by Cambyses during a fit of madness. Cambyses dying about this time, a conspiracy of seven influential nobles was formed against the false Smerdis, who was put to death, and one of the conspiring chiefs named Darius Hystaspes succeeded him. But it would seem that these occurrences in no way lessened the authority or influence of the Magi, and about this time one of their body named Zoroaster appears in the character of a reformer and purifier of the Persian religion, manners, and tastes. He was born B.C. 589, and it is said that many miracles attended his birth. One historian tells us that he laughed aloud the very day upon which he was born.

At this period of our history it is necessary for us to mention what was then the state of religious belief in Persia. They believed in one Supreme God, who formed and governed all things, who they supposed to occupy the sun, and his angels to reside in the stars. Up to this epoch they were destitute of temples, but erected altars on the tops of mountains, and burnt offerings thereon to the sun, by means of whose rays they lighted the sacred fire, as it was called, and which they said was kindled by consecrated sunbeams. This worship had been introduced by Solomon in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and Jeroboam and his successors appear to have continued in such abominationos, provoking the Lord to jealousy with them for the sins which they had committed.

Zoroaster set about the improvement and reformation of the Persians in an energetic and effectual manner, and however incomplete, their knowledge may appear when judged by the standard of aftertimes, there can be no doubt, compared with any of their contemporaries, they stand pre-eminent, and had much to teach, not only to sophists of their own days, but even to later inquirers.

The conception of the revolving celestial sphere, the gnomon or hands of a sun-dial, and the division of a day into twelve parts were first taught by these philosophers.

It was at the instance of Zoroaster that they built one large pyreum or fire-temple, where the sacred fire is kept continually burning, instead of erecting an altar and kindling a fire in the open air each time they wished to sacrifice. And he persuaded them to discontinue the system of honoring, by worship, certain animals, and, instead, to adopt the worship of what he calls the five elements, viz., the sun, fire, water, earth and air, and he put his laws in shape, and arranged them in the form of a book, called the Zend Avesta, which they now possess and regard as the code of laws for observance in matters of religious faith. He was indeed the patriarch and great law-giver of this nation; and in honor of his memory they call themselves "the followers of the Zend."

We are now obliged to take their own traditional history for several centuries of their existence. They say that they continued to fill the highest offices of honor and emolument in the kingdom of Persia, until about the year A.D. 300, when the Sovereign Prince of that country, desiring to possess himself of their wealth, stirred up the people against them, and that nearly the whole race was cut off and their property confiscated; a few concealed themselves, and so escaped the general slaughter, whilst others making their way to the sea, took shipping, and coasting along the Persian shores, reached the Island of Diu, where they landed, erected a Pyreum, lighted their sacred fire, and formed a settlement. (A.D. 642.) The Caliph Omar having conquered Persia, drove out the remnant of this nation, and they joined their brethren at Diu; and at present they have only one habitation or settlement in Persia, and that is in the oasis of Yesda. The natives of the west coast of India frequently pillaged and ravaged the settlement in a merciless manner, and as they were too weak to protect themselves, they gladly took advantage of the cession of Bombay to the English as the dowry of Catherine, given by Portugal when the Infanta was married to Charles II., A.D. 1661, and they have continued there ever since in the full fruition of that civil and religious liberty which those nations and people who form part and parcel

of the British Empire under our most gracious Queen alone possess and enjoy.

After this outline of their history, I believe I may say that I was justified in designating this race as a remarkable people.

2ndly. They differ also *ex toto* from other races in their *ethnology*. Naturalists set it forth as an axiom that every species of animal under a change of condition, has a corresponding change both in its organic and mental habitudes, *ex. gra.*;—Sheep come originally from Africa, but in that country the animal bears hair instead of wool, and it is only in colder countries that its covering gradually acquires a woolly texture. The law of nature, as regards the human species is exactly the very opposite to this, for, as man approaches the equator so does his hair partake more and more of a woolly character. In support of this, I will relate some personal observations which I have made upon this curious subject. Owing to peculiar circumstances I have been enabled to examine the physiological appearance of the negro in the slave market at Cairo, on the east and on the west coast of Africa, and in a negro village, near Halifax, Nova Scotia. I have not failed to observe the appearance of the African negro in his own arid and intensely hot land. There, his head is thickly covered with crispy, curling, short wool; his bones are large; he is flatfooted; his feet, hands, and head are immense in proportion to his size; his face is broad, unintellectual, but of a very sensual cast; nose flat, nostrils extending almost from ear to ear; lips thick, and skin perfectly black, and I may as well add that it is almost impossible to distinguish the Bedouin of the Libyan desert from these Negroes until they tell you who they are, and you prove them. On the other hand, the Negroes of Nova Scotia who, I believe have been settled there since the close of the last century, are altogether different in personal appearance from the African. Their features have lost the Ethiopian cast, and approximate to that of their white neighbours. They are a strong, robust, active, and well proportioned race. Their countenance is regular, the mouth small, the eyes lively and sparkling, the nose higher, nostrils less expanded. Their women are handsome and sprightly, their hair is tolerably long and smooth, certainly it is neither crispy nor woolly, as the Africans, and

their color is brown instead of being perfect black. As a proof, too, of their mental capacity, I learn that one of them recently took high honors at Cambridge.

To carry out our investigations, let us contrast the Indians of Montreal with those congregated at Toco in Trinidad. The former have long silky hair, a light brown skin, small hands and feet, and their appearance is pleasing. Those in Trinidad have disagreeable features, large bones, flat feet, heavy eyes, thick lips; their hair is crispy and of a woolly texture, and their color is almost as dark as an African's.

The Hebrews in temperate latitudes are as fair and well-proportioned as the most favored of the nations amongst whom they sojourn; whilst, observe them in Africa, Arabia, or India, and they are as dark as the natives; their hair, too, is of a hard, crispy, woolly formation, and, like the Bedouins, without enquiry one cannot distinguish them from the rest of the community.

Lastly, the Portuguese of Goa are perfect blacks, with enlarged features and hair of a woolly nature.

I have mentioned these facts to show you how it is with the human species as a general rule in the study of their natural history and physiology. But the condition, appearance, and history of these Fire-worshippers shew them to be altogether an exception to the law of Nature applicable to others, and the conclusions formed thereupon; for historical traditions represent them to have been in the earliest ages "of spare, but active persons, skins of a light brown, sallow'd sometimes by unusual exposure, high foreheads, large dark eyes, oval features, with aquiline noses, and long, thin, soft hair;" and it is their constant boast that "their race continues to be exactly the same as it was in the days of Menes,"—of a fair color in the land of blacks. In the course of the evening, when describing this race as it at present is, I shall again refer to this interesting point.

3rdly. Their language is remarkable. It is the oldest in existence they say. The ancient language of India is the Sanscrit, which bears a strong affinity to the Zend or Guzaratti, the name by which the present Parsi language is known. Indeed they allege that the Sanscrit is derived from theirs, and they also state that they are

now in possession of documents on enchantment and divinations written in cypher, handed down to them by succeeding generations, from the days of Menes, and their elders guard and watch over these sacred writings, deposited in the body of their Pyreum, under the sacred fire, as carefully and as faithfully as ever the Roman Virgins cared for the sacred writings and the fire consecrated to Vesta. It is of very rare occurrence for these people ever to refer to these writings. They discourage all inquiries upon the subject, and decline further intercourse with persons whom they believe to be inquisitive about such matters. It is singular that so little is known about them, and that, even although planted in the midst of a British city, they are enabled to observe the same mysteries in their religious rites now as they did thousands of years ago in Egypt. I do not believe that any person not of their creed has ever entered their Pyreum, or seen their sacred fire.

A remarkable circumstance connected with these writings is, that they say that the cypher which they possess enables them to read the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and that their elders are able to decipher those upon the ancient monuments of that land. Be this as it may, certainly the form of the Guzeratti and Sanscrit letters resembles these hieroglyphics; and I have no doubt in my own mind of the truth of what they say.

But enough has been said upon these questions to excite your interest about these people, and I shall now proceed to describe them as they are.

The number of Fire-worshippers in British India is estimated at 150,000. They are most numerous in Bombay and Guzeratt, and a few are settled in other parts of Asia, from Hong Kong, in China, to Peshawur, in Affghanistan.

Many of them are very wealthy, have large and well furnished houses, with agreeable gardens, drive in costly carriages with noble horses, and possess plentifully stocked libraries, the contents of which they very often make themselves fully conversant with.

Women occupy a much higher social position amongst them than among the Hindoos or Mussulmans; many have arrived at a high standard of education, and the higher classes have shown a desire to have their daughters well educated, and for a time employed European ladies as Gover-

nesses ; but owing to an idea that became prevalent amongst them, whether true or false I cannot say, that these ladies availed themselves of their position to make converts, the employment of them is now abandoned. Several well conducted schools exist amongst them where music, drawing, painting, history, languages, and other accomplishments are taught.

These people associate more freely with Europeans than other natives, and I believe on one or two occasions lady Jejeebhoy and daughters attended lady Arthur's balls at Government House ; but that is a solitary instance of such ladies mixing with Europeans.

The acts of liberality performed by many of them are almost incredible. It has been lately stated in the Bombay journals that the amount of gifts to public works and institutions, objects of charity and religion, and the cause of education made by Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy has exceeded two millions of rupees, and in consequence he has been honored by the Queen, who conferred the order of knighthood upon him.

Their character stands pre-eminent amongst eastern nations for honor and honesty in their dealings, and they are distinguished by the purity of their lives, the politeness of their manners, and the degree of scientific knowledge which they have attained.

My friend, Mr. Vining, of Bombay, having introduced me to a most intelligent and wealthy Parsee, I was invited to visit him at his house on the Bycullah Road, where I spent the day most agreeably with him, and I shall endeavor to describe what I saw, and how I fared upon that occasion.

Starting at the hour of 7 in the morning, I arrived at this gentleman's house in half an hour, doubtless before I was expected, for I found him engaged in his devotions, which I was sorry to interrupt. He was stript to his pyjamas, and whilst saying his prayers plentifully besprinkled his body with water, bowing and kneeling as he repeated various passages from his prayer-book. In about ten minutes he ceased, and commenced his toilet. After drying his body, which was as fair as a European's, he clothed himself in a snow white robe, of tunic form, reaching almost to his feet. His limbs were encased in pyjamas of

most costly and rich silk, of gaudy colors, whilst a handsome and expensive Cashmere shawl encircled his waist, and a high crowned conical shaped cap completed his costume. His head had been shaven, and except a moustache upon his upper lip, he had no hair upon his face. His forehead was high and lofty, his eyes full and black, his nose aquiline, his features regular, and his complexion pale but fair; his hands were small and delicate; he wore a couple of rings on his fingers and ear-drops of value hung from his ears. His appearance was certainly most prepossessing, and he looked the gentleman. He spoke English fluently. He then informed me that the prayers which he had just finished had been offered to God for the good breakfast he had partaken of, and that they always pray both before and after meals. He told me that his breakfast had consisted of dried fruit, fish, fowl, and cake. As the sun was not too powerful to prevent it, he proposed a stroll in the garden which surrounded his house. He employed a discharged English soldier as gardener, and the grounds were therefore laid out in the English style and in perfect order. Here were groves of oranges, limes, mangoes, grape vines, pomegranates, plantains, and shaddocks, the shade of which rendered it an agreeable walk, even in the hottest part of the day. From many of the trees handsome variegated lamps were hung. The house was a delightful, large, airy, roomy, and commodious one. His reception hall was furnished in a most gorgeous manner, with costly mirrors, chandelebra, and side-boards, upon which were displayed much valuable silver. There was little or no other furniture in the hall except a Chinese mat, and curtains before the windows and doors, whilst upon a small table, before which a chair had been placed, was laid out an elegant and substantial breakfast for me, his guest. Having requested me to be seated, and take care of myself, he left me alone to see after his household arrangements. Attendants stood around my chair, one to administer to my wants, the other to drive away the flies, and the third to fan me. Having done full justice to the dainties provided, I adjourned to the balcony outside the hall, where I found my host seated in an arm chair, and an empty one along side his, upon which he requested me to sit down. After

asking me how I had fared, and obtaining a fitting reply, I ventured to tell him I had a "*mem sahib*" and "*babbus*" in England, and asked him if he had any. "Yes," he said, "I have two wives and six children. We do not allow our wives to be seen, but I will show you my children before you go. I am now thirty-two years old, and have been married twenty-six years to one wife and about four years to another. I am very fond of both, and make great joy for them, and they have books, and music, and pictures, and nautches to beguile their weary hours with, and when they go abroad, there is the Gharry, or close carriage, for them to drive about in. I said our ladies appeared in public as freely as they pleased. He replied he knew that, but that it was not the custom for high born persons to do so.

He then told me his history. His father had been a wealthy man, and he inherited a large property. He had also been Coal Agent to the Bombay Government, but owing to some unjust accusations, he had been deprived of his contract and incarcerated. The Grand Jury, however, ignoring the bill, he was set at liberty. After a chat of some two hours, he proposed a drive, and his carriage was ordered; it was an elegant turn out, —a yellow English chariot, drawn by two noble bays, with silver mounted harness, a native coachman and two running footmen. We first drove to the hospital founded and endowed by Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, calculated to accommodate 250 sick or poor Parsees. It is a long brick building, three stories high, and contains about 150 separate wards, with surgery, kitchens, store rooms, &c. The worthy knight spent 40,000 rupees upon the building of this edifice, and he and the East India Company jointly contribute 40,000 rupees annually for its support. We next drove to Malabar Hill to see a Temple of Silence, or a Parsee cemetery.

The manner in which they dispose of their dead is peculiar. Hindus burn, and Christians and Mussulmans bury the bodies of their deceased; but the Parsees do neither. Large cemeteries are prepared with much labor and expense. They are built in the form of lofty towers quite open at the top, where a few iron rails are laid across. The dead bodies are carried and deposited upon these, and are thus exposed and left to be devoured by crows, vultures, and other birds of prey.

To protect them from these, the bodies of the wealthy are covered with a screen of brass wire; but those of the common people are left quite exposed, and soon disappear. The bones, dropping through the railings, are from time to time collected, put into urns, and placed in a separate part of the cemetery till they become altogether decomposed. They attach great importance to the rites of burial, and certain persons are set apart to attend to these duties exclusively.

We then drove to view another mighty work executed by Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, viz., the connection of a small adjacent island with Bombay, by means of a handsome causeway on which this Prince of Merchants had expended some 50,000 rupees; and on our journey, we had much conversation relative to the Parsee faith, as it now exists. This race at present seem to worship a god as invisible, omnipresent, and omnipotent, and they say that they contemplate the sun, fire, earth, water, or air only as symbols of the Deity. But to see them at worship, most of them gazing intently upon the sun at the time one is inclined to believe that they then think of nothing beyond the visible object they are reverencing.

My companion, who has the character of being one of the most intelligent and best informed amongst the Parsees of the present day, informed me that in their temple the sacred fire is kept continually burning, that it is preserved, as before mentioned with much care, and that many rites and ceremonies are performed upon it and to it. Fragrant kinds of wood, gums, spices, perfumery and oils are offered to it,—their reverence for fire prevents their even using it for the self-indulgence of smoking tobacco; and, as gunpowder can only be used in connection with fire, they can neither become soldiers nor huntsmen. They neither make, prepare, or worship the image or symbol of a Divinity nor idols of any description.

Returning from Sir Jamsetjee's Causeway, we entered the City of Bombay, or Fort, as it is called, and paid a visit to an acquaintance of my friends called Eduljee Cowajee, who resided in the main street, in a large brick house, and carried on the business of banker and jewel merchant. We found this gentleman sitting cross-legged on a Persian carpet on the floor in his office, surrounded by piles of gold, silver, and copper coin, which

instead of counting, as he received or paid it out, he merely weighed. He was dressed like my friend, and was very neat in his appearance, and most courteous and affable in his manner. His business was to lend money to small traders and other classes of people at a high rate of interest; and this class often make large advances of money to native princes on mortgage of their revenues, or to farmers upon the security of their crops.

Next, we drove across "The Green" by the Parsee Wells, where we saw crowds of Parsee common women drawing and carrying water for domestic use. These women were particularly handsome, of fair complexion, regular features, small bones and limbs, with long silky thin hair, and their dress was adjusted with much taste and propriety. It generally consisted of a yellow or red silk close-fitting tunic, and a long doti, or robe of silk which encircled the body, one end reaching to the feet, whilst the other was tastefully thrown over the head, veiling the face. All were heavily burdened with ornaments. They wore jewels in the ears and nose, rings on the fingers, arms, legs, and toes, chains of gold or silver on their necks, and bracelets upon their wrists and ankles—these ornaments amounting in value to hundreds or thousands of rupees. Carrying their burdens upon their heads, they held themselves erect, and moved gracefully. This extravagance in jewelry, and ostentation in wearing it, is severely commented upon by many, but like the ladies' fashions in other lands, they set all censure and counsel in this respect at defiance, and take their own will as the juster criterion of taste.

Returning to my friend's house, we found his children assembled on the verandah to receive us. They appeared to be from 1 to 7 years of age, were gaudily dressed, and loaded with jewelry, each child was attended by two servants, and though fair complexioned, looked pale and sickly,—after shaking hands and saying "how do," they retired.

My host then requested me to partake of dinner, which was laid out for me in the same place and in the same manner as my breakfast. A Portuguese cook had evidently been employed to prepare it, and it would have done honor to Verrey himself. Wine and beer were not wanting, and on its termination I was shewn into a cool darkened apartment, where a charpoy, or native

bedstead, had been prepare for me to repose upon, and rest myself after the fatigues of the day. This charpoy is a rude bedstead with mosquito nettings, a Persian carpet is substituted for a mattrass, and a mat laid over it forms the couch; but as it is only about four feet long, one has to lie with his knees tucked up to his chin. Orientals in general make but little change in their dress for the night. I soon fell asleep, and when I awoke the sun was far down; refreshing myself by means of a bath, I was quite ready for the evening drive along the parade, where all the rank, fashion, and beauty of Bombay assemble of an evening to "eat the air." And as good luck would have it, we came across a Parsee wedding procession. It was headed by a band of musicians; then came the bridegroom on a white horse, surrounded by his family and their friends, all on foot; next came the bride in an open litter, with the male members of her family and their friends, also a-foot, and another band of music closed the procession. It was conducted in a quiet, sober and respectable manner, quite different from the weddings of the Mussulmans or Hindus.

Agreements and arrangements concerning marriage are made by parents, who feel it to be an important part of their duty to effect this for their children.

Boys are generally married at ages varying from 6 to 10 years, and girls at an earlier period of life; and if any girl be deformed, or remain unmarried until she is 11 years old, she is made away with. This wicked custom prevails unchecked at Bombay at the present moment; and the police there are either unwilling or unable to repress it.

The marriage of children is regarded as a matter of much importance, and the Parsees very superstitious in respect to lucky and unlucky days for the ceremony. The stars are consulted, and if propitious, the contract between the parents is then effected, and the date for the ceremonies is selected. The are numerous, tedious and mystical, and to the mass are wholly unintelligible. They are performed by one of the elders of the temple, who repeats by rote, a number of mysterious words and phrases for a considerable length of time. Large sums of money are expended on these ceremonies, and their attendant feasts, illuminations and presents; and they often involve

the lower classes in debts which embarrass them for years. When the marriage ceremony is over, the bridegroom and the bride return to their respective homes, each living with their parents, and occasionally interchanging visits, till they arrive at a state of puberty, when some further ceremonies are performed, and the parties begin to live together. By an act of the British Parliament, polygamy is sanctioned and protected amongst the Hindu, Mussulman, and Parsi population of India, and the children of each wife are equally legitimate. No man can divorce any of his wives without due form of law, and he is bound to support them and their children.

We next drove along "Back Bay," and witnessed the whole Parsee nation offering their vesper prayer to the setting sun. This is indeed a striking sight. Here are assembled thousands of neatly and cleanly clad fire worshippers in their white robes, bare-footed, with the dark blue waves of the sea rolling up to their very feet, bowing in reverence and in prayer and praise to that transcendent orb, which God in his mercy gave to man as a minister, to do him service, and not as an object for him to adore. As the sun dips below the sea and disappears, his worshippers cease their devotions, resume their sandals, and return home. No women are ever observed to worship here, and whether or not they do pray I cannot say.

On returning to the house of my friend, we found it gaily lighted up. Those lamps I before spoke of, and numbers of others hanging around the hall and from the ceilings, were all lighted and in full blaze; whether it was in honor of my humble self, or their deity, I cannot well tell. A large party of fire-worshippers was assembled, seats were provided for the whole party in the balcony, fruits, cakes, and sherbet were handed round, and we chatted most agreeably together until a late hour, when, ordering my carriage, I bid my kind host and friends good night, and returned to my tent.

I must now hasten to conclude, as I have already occupied too much time. These people generally follow the occupation of merchants, ship-builders, workers in wood and ivory, carvers, printers, and house stewards, and in all these avocations they excel. Wooler & Co. of Bombay, have an extensive store in Regent Street, London,

for the sale of furniture made by these people. They greatly excel as ship-builders. The Master of the Bombay Dockyard is a Parsee. Vessels of all kinds and classes are built by them. The forests of India contain the very best and most durable timber that the world produces. Ships of war, and ships for commerce of the largest size have been built by Parsees both in Bombay and Maulmain, and these ships are said to surpass in material and workmanship all others that float upon the seas. For twenty years and upwards the ship *Earl of Balcarres*, built by Parsees and owned by Parsee merchants, was the largest, most commodious, and swiftest vessel afloat, many and many a storm and hurricane has she weathered in a remarkable manner.

But I have already, I fear, occupied your attention too long, so I conclude, wishing you all very many and happy returns of this solemn season, and although it is no part of my system of instruction to intrude religion upon my pupils, I believe I shall not overstep the rule I have resolved upon ~~when~~ to congratulate you all, my friends, that we have a knowledge of the Great Jehovah, the only true God, whom may we so faithfully serve whilst here, as to gain hereafter that reward which we all seek to possess when time shall become eternity.

Mr. Walshe then distributed some school prizes, and the party broke up. We understand that the following is the programme of the series of Lectures to be delivered during the season :—

Wednesday, Feb. 4.—Rev. D. Black. Subject, “Rhetoric.”

Wednesday, March 4.—Rev. J. E. Tanner. Subject, “Switzerland; as it was and is.”

Wednesday, March 25.—Richard MacDonnell, Esq. Subject, “Education.”

Tuesday, April 7.—A. Walshe, Esq. Subject, “Art; with some observations upon the articles exhibited during the late Railway Celebration.”